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On Stage: Drama in Transition

Mary F. Courtney

The contemporary theatre is a center of a many-faceted and widely diffuse creative activity. Thus, from the beginning, any commentary on the quality, the direction, or even the motivation of the modern dramatists' work must at best be tentative and adequately qualified. One face of this multi-colored prism would reflect the experimentalists of the theatre. O'Neill's *Great God Brown*, Ionesco's *The Chairs*, Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* search out new dramatic metaphors that will heighten the artists' representation of human existence. Yet another face of the prism reflects, not the dramatic technician, but the artists' concern with the revitalization of art itself. Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is an example. The philosopher and the social theorist have stakes in this vibrating complex. Sartre's *No Exit*, Romain's *Knock* are but two of a multitude of important plays with this direction. Then, there are the mythmakers, or perhaps better, the myth remakers. Giraudoux in *Tiger at the Gates* and Cocteau in *The Infernal Machine* are notable examples of twentieth century mythmaking with a meaning structure that plunges directly to the heart of universal problems but in a context that a perceptive audience can identify with.

One could continue almost indefinitely, describing first one, then another direction that this polychromatic art form takes, the result being an awareness of the diversity of form, of technique, of attitude that permeates contemporary life as manifested in her arts. But since it is my conviction that modern drama is evolving towards a wholeness, an integration, totally different in kind from that of Greek or Shakespearian drama, I would

like to discuss what I think are the signposts, the forecasters of a new dramatic attitude. It is also convenient to note that the order and beauty that suffuse Greek drama originates primarily in the religious and ritual superstructure. It is just this cosmic architecture that is the Apollonian, the harmony-giving element, in a tragedy like the *Oedipus Rex* where the Dionysian *persona*, Oedipus, is the focus of great disorder.

In the polyethical, polytheistic world culture of the mid-twentieth century, where can we look for a universally consistent value structure to vitalize drama and give it the serene beauty of a Sophoclean tragedy, or the baroque majesty of a Shakespearian tragedy? Modern man, if T. S. Eliot is to be taken as a kind of spokesman for our age, is not fulfilled in a world fragmented by his affinity for seeing the many and his inability for recognizing the one. And modern drama is a witness to his uneasiness. O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* is a relevant example of a metaphorical presentation of man being destroyed by a world he has created for himself but which has outgrown him and resists his domination. At least the creative minority has objectified the sterility that petrifies the inner humanity of man, the hardness that sets in with pure rationalism, undiluted realism and naturalism, and nihilism, only to mention a few key attitudes that prevailed in earlier drama. I think that a reality that can be perceived can be objectified in art, and in this way be deeply felt. This reality can become the object of experimentation. In the case of drama, the artist has been able to perceive the monstrous ineffectiveness of man's present mode of being that is not com-

mensurate with his total human capacities. He has been able to heighten this perception with action, plot, character, metaphor, etc. . . . and with this he has brought reality to the level where it has been deeply felt by his audience. The artist has objectified his audience's inner nostalgia, that often bitter ennui that seems always to feed on itself. *The Misunderstanding*, an early play by Camus, is perfect as an example of this hardly humane desperation for liberation from the "silences" that confront man in a life without unity, without direction.

It has taken a long while for the creative minority to make their perceptions felt. But they have been a preparation. They have permitted man to look at the many superfluous appendages of a now disinherited tradition that he has been clutching to himself in an effort to give security to his life. One obvious example is the rationalists' rejection of organized religion and, following this rejection, an atheistic or at best an agnostic appreciation of the existence of God. Yet these same rationalists, who would in theory reject the Protestant ethic and all of its religious implications, would at the same time try to find meaning in the forms of the ethic divested of their transcendent meaning. This does not seem to have satisfied man's need to project the importance of his life beyond the contingencies of the now.

What do the important dramatists answer to the need of man to have a mode of transcendence? I think that it is not too optimistic to say that the best modern dramatists have come face to face with this problem. And the future will judge them in proportion as they witness the reality of the dilemma and in proportion as they present man challenging it and deriving meaning from it.

Today I think that the audience can feel the exhilaration and adventure that a theatre open at both ends offers. By this I do not mean to infer that the modern dramatist is a radical or an absolute liberal. Actually, paradoxical as it may appear, the artist must of necessity be somewhat of a conservative, using the language, the concepts, the forms that tradition has conditioned before he came to use them. But the artist is challenged by the task of seeing through tradition, of seeing beyond what are the deadening vestiges of an exhausted tradition to something more real, more beautiful, more true (if we believe

with Teilhard de Chardin that man is continually evolving into a higher, more complex being).

One cursory glance at a listing of the dramatists that do seem to be reaching out to touch a higher reality, something richly meaningful for men of the future who breathe air that has been scented with the grandeur of Greece, of Rome, of the high Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and we discover poets. Poetry forces itself down, deep into the well of the soul where man's being, his needs, cannot hide beneath appearances. Poetry seems to be the harbinger of a new and vital drama. And the greatest contribution that poetry gives to the drama is a reinstatement of man as the "raison d'être" of the theatre and of its conventions. In addition, poetry brings not simply man, but man in his essence, in his dignity, to the theatre. Poetry can follow man to where his deepest and most universal self lies waiting, suffering, being alone, and by some miracle of creation inform its discovery with a beauty that can speak to other men waiting, and suffering. And with a great poet, the mysterious power of his creative vision will ultimately discover God at the spring of man's being.

Since poetry is the heightened expression of all of man's basic emotions, the reinstatement of the poetic mode of expression opens new doors for tragic drama. Modern poetry, with its consistent use of alogical progression and stream of consciousness, is perfectly suited for the artistic presentation of the tragic conflict of a hero who will fight destiny, the world, necessity and even himself. And poetry can bring the hero to a point of transcendence where his experience of pain and confusion is transformed into the kathartic experience of suffering.

Some poets who have aided in the reenthronement of poetic expression in drama, Fry, Eliot, Garcia Lorca, MacLeish, Anderson and Claudel, have also given us their answer to man's need for a mode of transcendence. I do not mean to imply that the characters of a dramatist are merely his mouthpieces. Eliot in his *Three Voices Of Poetry* would contest this. It does not seem to be Eliot himself in *Murder in a Cathedral* but rather the character of Thomas, taking hold of reality, rising to inspiring heights, that elevates our sensibilities. But Eliot, the poet, had sought out the truth, the beauty, the

dignity of man. He discovered the character and the action of Thomas of Canterbury, and he tried to let poetry reveal his being. The characters of Claudel in *The Satin Slipper* and *The Tidings Brought to Mary* effect the same type of transcendence. Dona Prouheze and Violane come to face evil, battle it, and through grace rise above it. Fry's characters find transcendence in love. His poetry is lyrical and optimistic, delighted with itself, and his people are essentially like it. MacLeish in *J.B.* would satisfy J.B.'s longing for a reason to live by answering, Love! Yet his desperate cry in the midst of sorrow is no kin to the species of love that animates *The Lady's Not For Burning*.

Another immediate source of drama is existentialism. Of course, action has always been the implicit subject of the dramatist. But with society's explicit awareness that man must make decisions in his life, that he must choose to be; with this awareness there is less chance of drama becoming preoccupied with the accidents and in so doing misplace entirely man's essence. Henry Montherlant in *The Queen Dies* presents a profound, moving

drama of a strong man caught and destroyed in the endless conflicts between good and evil and the necessity of acting in the face of the problem. Sartre and Camus are two other notable examples of artists that take many themes for their work from the existential crisis.

This entire commentary is limited by the fact that I can only make inferences from the plays that I have seen and read and there are of course many more plays that would perhaps alter greatly or contradict these assertions. Thus, in the interests of sanity, this presentation has been informal. Nevertheless, I feel that our modern stage in its state of transition cannot leave the spectator without a sense of the more beautiful, more true things to come. With the practical reality of a world-culture imposing itself upon the not so distant horizons, drama will indeed have to readjust its traditions; the critics will have to begin to start with Aristotle's questions rather than with his answers and it seems to me that the signposts are there that indicate that this is happening. There is experimentation, poetry and man.

Some days—everything's a mess

Joyce Hallisey, '63

They sat facing one another—
the girl with the blue scarf and the man who wore a flower.
Was it he

who first mistook the white lace cloth
for the napkin on his knees
and tugged too hard—

Or she

filling her cup who over-poured?

They sat facing one another—
the man with the blue scarf and the girl who wore a flower.
Was it she

who shattered
the vase that scattered the sugar

Or he—

who salted his tea?

Bernanos:

The Diary of Grace

Mary Alessi, '65

"As long as we remain in this life we can still deceive ourselves, think that we love by our own will, that we love independently of God. But we're like madmen stretching our hands to clasp the moon reflected in water." These quiet words of the Curé d'Ambricourt in *The Diary of a Country Priest* surrender an interpretational clue to the novel's supraliteral significance.

The *Diary* is a story of sin and grace—the dynamics of their coexistence and their interaction. God is a real character in the *Diary*, the Absolute for or against Which all action is directed. The Curé d'Ambricourt is His image, the alter-Christus. Satan, too, is an objective existent who finds his persona in Chantal, Dr. Delbende, and in the devouring hate of the Comtesse. The Curé is an amalgam of godlikeness and humanity. He symbolizes the moral victory of identification with Christ in His poverty and suffering, as well as the paradox and mystery that inheres in a freedom surrendered to the will of God. We can find a patterned underscoring of this theme in the novel's subplots, in the brilliant spiritual triumphs of the minor characters. Through them we watch the slow and dramatic "rebirth in grace," the return to childlike surrender of the self as the only true way to confront God.

I think the child symbol is the most potent reinforcement of the overall symbolism of the *Diary*. Its periodic recurrence in every major scene implies a key-like significance. At the outset of the novel, Curé de Torcy defines the role of a priest: to keep the "soul of childhood" alive in the world. Sin comes with the loss of innocence, the denial of the "sense of powerlessness" which is the only honest definition of man's role in the God-man relationship. Conforming to this concept and symbol, the Curé d'Ambricourt equates his prayer (a powerful element of the novel), with the "first clumsy steps" of a child.

As he becomes more and more childlike, the Curé rises paradoxically to a mature interior spirituality. Significantly, after the purging of his "dark night" experiences, he throws his arms about young Sylvestre Galuchet and "sobs on his shoulder." The Curé becomes a hero little by little as he bares to the reader the terrifying, strangely beautiful implications of the Christocentric life. He must be a father and a child. But the coexistence of these roles seems to involve a contradiction which is only resolved in the subplot of the Comtesse's "conversion." Although the Curé repeatedly addresses her as "my daughter," she writes: "I hope you won't be annoyed with me for regarding you as a child. Because you are!" With this recognition, the "child-Curé" symbolically achieves the integration he has been seeking—the unification of two commitments in the flesh and in the spirit.

The character of Louis Dufréty is an antithetical presentation of the same symbol. He embodies the puerility and fantasy experience of the child. Shrinking from self-confrontation, unable to define his relations to God and men, he can never break through the self-induced neurosis of the perpetual role-player. In a letter to the Curé, his concluding exhortation, "Come quickly," is metaphorically interpreted as a "child's cry," and the "showing-off" quality of a subsequent letter parallels this. Yet, it is in Dufréty's tenement apartment that the Curé dies, whispering, "Grace is everywhere . . ." The man's childish uncertainty contrasts with the Curé's heroically child-simple surrender to Grace.

Military images function to define the meaning of Bernanos' novel. Reality, behind the peaceful facade of a country parish, unveils as a battle similar in dramatic tension to Milton's angelic war. Like Michael, the Curé faces Satan as a "soldier on the battlefield." In an emotionally taut scene with

Chantal in the churchyard, he allies himself with the forces of God, "I shall not accept your challenge. God accepts no challenge." Chantal's interior torment is figuratively described as a "battle," or "revolt." Like Satan, she is "struggling against the current of life, . . . wearing (herself) out in absurd, terrifying attempts." The subtle reference to Joan of Arc, "she who died on May 30, 1431," is artfully operative. She is the "last real" soldier-saint, but her battles are still being symbolically waged. The Curé's "armament" is his awareness that "grace is everywhere." Thus, he can pursue the Comtesse until she is forced to accept the schematic enormity of reality, and can say finally, "God had need of a witness, and I was chosen."

Pathological images persist in the *Diary* gradually becoming ominous leitmotifs. The Curé's "bouts of pain" that faintly echo the sin-grace duel are presented as literal actualities in the novel. Sin is described as an "abscess," a "wound." The Curé's cancer is unidentifiable at first, a secret, mysterious force ravaging his body. But in his pain, he can find an objective basis for identification with "Christ in agony." The disease forces

him to "live on bread soaked in wine." Chapter by chapter, the allusions to disease recur until they reach their climactic height in the prophetic lucidity of the Curé's realization, "I am alone, utterly alone, facing my death." Like the Christ of Gethsemane, he cries out, "My death is here . . . I am afraid (and) shall say (it) . . . and not be ashamed." Paradoxically, it is this very parallelism that causes him to hope for a transcendent union with God. In typical child imagery, he envisions that he will one day waken "on the shoulder of Jesus Christ."

From the pages of Bernanos' *Diary* emerges one of the most striking ethical symbols in modern literature—the man who is made in the image of God. His is not the equation Milton's Eve sought, but rather an approximation through realistic awareness of God's Infinity and man's limitations. The Curé's search is the Telemachan motion of all supernaturally aware men toward their place of rest in God. Through the subtle didacticism of the *Diary's* symbols we see how man can strain his being beyond the mere "reflections" of the moon.

Humptimus Dumptimus

Mary Vallely, '65

Humptimus Dumptimus in muro sedet
Humptimus Dumptimus magnopere cecedit
Neque omnes equi, neque viri regis
Humptimum Dumptimum refecerunt.

Johannes et Jilla

Mary Vallely, '65

Johannes et Jilla in colle iverunt
Situlum aquae ferre
Johannes cecedit et caput derumpit
Et ea post eum se volvit.

A NEW BROOM

Carol Ann Glowacki, '63

"Well, you're home," Helen turned from the sink as Mark let the back door slam behind him.

"Sure, I told you I'd be home before noon today, so here I am. . . ."

He was pleasant and unusually cheerful as he stood his gun in the corner. Windburn and a healthy fatigue recalled the days she first met him—"a fair and strapping lad," her mother had said. Now he was home; another day for the same routine.

"Have a good trip?" she asked blankly.

"Great." He dropped his canvas jacket on the floor. "Wait a second 'til I open the bag." Reaching into the pouch, he carefully fished around for something.

"Oh, Mark, not on the floor—please. Couldn't you take that down cellar first?"

Mark pulled out two limp hare by their hind legs and laid them on the sideboard. They stared coldly at the ceiling, blood spilling off their fur in jelly-like spots on the sink.

"Don't worry about the mess; I'll clean it up." Before she could object, he lifted a pheasant out of the bag and held it close to him so that its back reflected the light shafting through the window. "Look at the colors, Helen. . . . Ought to be good for tying flies, come spring." He fanned the tail and wings in front of the window, watching the rust, red, orange, and blue-green spectrum appear and disappear. "I didn't expect to get anything . . . not on the first morning."

"Mark, for God's sake, I just cleaned the sink." She pushed in front of him to sponge up the blood and throw away the dried leaves that had clung to the hare. He backed off.

She worries too much about this damned house, he thought. Lots of people do housework and it never rubs off. . . . Not a hair out of place . . . a few years ago she wouldn't have . . .

"I'm sorry," Helen sighed, straining. "I didn't mean to snap. . . . Was it cold up there?"

"Umm . . . ? No, it wasn't too bad. Had a fire going . . . lasted until morning both nights." Thinking about the trip, the spark that was there a minute ago flared up again. "But let me tell you what happened . . . get the knife out of my left pocket, will you?" He turned to the sideboard and started running water through the earcasses. ". . . In the morning, I took a walk up over the ridge that runs along the back side of the cabin . . . you know the one. Well, I was going through the junipers . . . and a hare took off in front of me. I shot . . . and, you know, it was funny, but the rest of the day seemed charmed. Oh, I didn't bring much home, but that isn't the point. It was the cleanest day I've ever felt. It kind of pressed against me like a fresh towel or a sheet that's been hanging in the wind. Do you know what I mean?"

Helen stood beside him with her arms folded and stared down at his hands as he talked. "Would you try not to splash so much? . . . I'm not sure I *do* know what you mean." She just watched his hands and thought of how many times she had asked him not to mess up the house. *I don't mind a house that looks lived in, she thought, but a barn. . . .*

Mark grabbed her around the waist. "Helen—why don't you come with me next weekend?—Why don't you?" He felt her pull back from his wet hands. "We can go up to the cabin and do some hunting, if you like. . . . We used to go." *Sure we used to go, then the house started getting too dusty to leave—even for two days.*

Helen turned. "I don't know . . . it sounds like a good idea . . . but I hate to leave everything for next week."

"Come on, it'll be the best thing for both of us to get a little air once in awhile. You



could double up this week . . . or let things go . . . we could be out of here Friday afternoon the latest."

Things that happened the past few days began coming back to him. *I want to tell her*, he thought, *but right now she'd only brush it off.*

She stood in front of him, her hair like chestnut in the late morning sun. "Why do you want to go again next weekend? You haven't got out of your clothes yet today." She didn't want to think of going out there with him right now.

"For the love of Mike, Helen, who's around

here to mess anything up?" He saw it coming; he bared the wounds again. Each time they argued it came out eventually. "We might as well get right to it this time, Helen. If things keep going this way, there never will be anyone to live in this house."

"That's right, blame me. I suppose I can work miracles with just the flick of a switch."

"I didn't start to blame you until you decided that if you couldn't have kids, you wouldn't want them anyway. God damn it, Helen, you can't get up in the middle of every night to do housework!"

"I don't want to talk about it." She closed

her eyes and put her hands up to her hair. *Let it pass*, she thought, *let it pass*. ". . . What would you like for lunch?"

"Nothing!" he snapped. "I want to talk about it. I want you to know how good I felt coming home today . . . and then how lousy I felt when I realized I was going somewhere else for my satisfaction." He twisted her by the elbow and made her face him. "Do you hear me?"

She stared up at him. *I knew he was like this . . . or I might have guessed*. All the excuses she could find were coming to her defense. *What is he talking about? He's probably had plenty of women*, she thought to herself.

Mark laughed. "You really are a sight standing there fuming—with your mouth open."

"I beg your pardon," she answered coldly. "Finish your story before my curiosity gets the better of me."

"Listen, I didn't mean that I . . ." He sat down at the table. ". . . Have some coffee and I'll tell you what happened."

"I don't see how you can be so calm . . . if this is your idea of some kind of joke . . . or whatever . . . I don't understand any of it. . . ." She brought the cups and sat down.

"Everything happened in the craziest way. I don't know where to begin exactly, it's so mixed up. . . . I didn't want to go out to the cabin in the first place, but I had no choice. It was either stay here and argue with you about the usual things, or go out alone and try to find some kind of change of atmosphere. . . . Well . . . I was in the middle of the godawful woods, walking around by myself . . . I started to feel peculiar. It was beautiful when I went out . . . the early sun and the pine smell seemed to fill up my head so I don't remember anything but that moment . . . there. I was uneasy—the way you get when you're expecting something to happen, or someone to come . . . it was dull, and kind of stuffy. The fact I was alone, in some ways disgusted me, but in other ways it made me glad.

"It was the first time the air and trees had that effect on me, made me feel so clean . . . and yet dirty—you know, the kind of person you don't want to stand near because someone will think you know him. . . . I don't know whether it's this house or not, but it felt good to be out. The more I walked, the stronger the feeling got inside my head. Call

it anything you want . . . tension, or stimulus maybe, but it was there. . . . And as I reached the top of the ridge, the hare jumped out in front of me. In that instant, when I shot, everything changed . . . I was master. . . . Whatever had preyed on my mind disappeared and I took over again . . . conquered it. I was free, and clean . . . the cleanest I've been in a long, long while. . . . I didn't want to stop hunting then; I kept combing through the briars. . . . Can you see how strange it is?" He studied her face for some reaction. *Does she believe me? She probably thinks I'm crazy . . . or perverted*.

Nothing could be that way, she thought. *It doesn't make sense*. "Mark, I don't . . . I'm not sure what you mean. Have you been drinking?"

"No, damn it." He couldn't get mad at her now. "Helen, think for a minute. Don't you understand . . . doesn't it make a difference to you that I felt that way . . . so good, in fact . . . and so free?" He leaned forward across the table trying to make it plain.

Helen sat firm in her chair and looked out the window. "I don't know, Mark. I don't see how anything could be like that."

"Then . . . then never mind that right now. All I want you to do is come out to the cabin . . . out of the house."

I don't feel hemmed in anymore, he mused. *No matter what, I can't feel hemmed in because I don't care. All right, I care, but she doesn't want to help. We can't be alone forever in this museum. Helen, please come . . . please . . . come. . . .* Begging to himself, he put his cup in the sink and began to salt the carcasses for the freezer.

Helen walked up behind him. "If it'll make you happy, I'll go with you. But I've never felt like that any of the times we went on a trip."

"We haven't been away together for more than six years, Helen. A lot has changed since then. . . . It's just that I wish you would want to come."

"I do want to come with you," she replied slowly.

"Then it's settled. I'll leave the office at noon on Friday, and we can be out of here by two o'clock."

By the time Mark got home on Friday, Helen had found her old canvas jacket and trousers in the attic, and had packed them together with her vest and boots. The ammunition and food they would need was at the

cabin; Mark had only to put the guns and clothing in the trunk of the car while she locked the back door.

The ride to the cabin became more pleasant as they drove away from the city, but Mark could tell it was going to be hard. For the two hours they rode, he spoke no more than three or four words while Helen looked out the window and mumbled an answer as they passed the harvested fields and squat farm houses.

The cabin was set far back in the woods, away from the main dirt roads and noise. It was closed in the warmth of the trees, and some laurel still grew where it had once been deliberately planted; but the rest of the place was running down. The trees had lost branches across the front patch of lawn, and the pine needle mat was thick and springy under foot.

"It looks worse than it actually is, Helen, so don't start to worry about it." He tried edging into the conversation as he handed the shotguns out of the trunk. "Here's the twelve . . . and the twenty. . . . Want to bring them in and take them out of the cases? I'll get the rest of the stuff. You know, we've got enough time for a short walk today—so we can make an early start tomorrow."

"Sure, I'd like to go sight-seeing. . ." she pushed the door open with her elbow, "What a mess! You haven't swept the floor in at least six months." She dropped the guns on the sofa, threw off her coat, and hurried in to the kitchen. "What if someone should come in here, Mark? Wouldn't you be ashamed to have them see this place?"

He was right behind her. "Will you stop? We're supposed to be here relaxing. Come on outside and let that go for now." He pulled her out of the cabin by the back of her skirt. Another time, the joke would have lasted.

"Honestly, Mark, you should know better than to let that cabin go. We'll *have* to clean it up later."

They walked out into the open air and climbed the ridge in back of the cabin. It was a mild day for November; the sun beat through the trees like a waterfall, and a few reminiscent flowers nosed up from the pine needles on the ground. Crisp green smells and crunching sounds rubbed against them as they walked. Mark wanted to say something about the feelings he had had and the way it had begun, but it was warmer in the

quiet. Down below, they could see the cabin and the car as they walked along the ridge in the sunlight.

"Well, what do you think? Was it worth the bother to come up here?" He picked a flat, mossy rock that was part of the ledge, sat down and lit a cigarette.

As she stood behind him, Helen could see the mountain range growing into the next county and hung with fog that seemed to slide into the valley. "I don't feel anything, yet," she answered in a matter-of-fact tone.

Mark smiled. *She'll get the air into her and she'll calm down. . . . So nervous standing there.*

He knows, she thought. He knows I can feel something . . . he wants me to . . . I wish I really understood what he meant.

He stretched out his hand, she took it willingly, and half in a daze, smiled back at him as he stood up. "Let's go back down to the cabin, Helen, it's getting late." He took her by both hands and drew her close. His eyes were calm, and their polished brown looked softly and heavily into her face.

She spun around and tugged his hand. "Let's . . . I'm starved."

Bitch, Mark thought. *Tag, I'm it . . . all right, I'll play. . . .* "What are we having for supper?"

"I don't know . . . but I'll race you down," she called back over her shoulder. *Not now, not yet . . .*, she ran ahead of him thinking, *we could have stayed home if it's going to be now.*

"I know a short cut . . . I'll be there ahead of you," Mark retorted. *She would run.*

"You'll never catch me!" she laughed back at him.

After supper, Mark lit the fireplace while she cleared the table. There were too many things to do before she could go in and talk to him. . . . She kept thinking how she felt when they were out . . . as though what Mark had described to her was penetrating . . . somehow. *Uncomfortable was what he said. . . . That's how it feels.*

The night came in heavily. Before she had a chance to scratch the dust out of the corner, Mark called to her from the living room. "Helen, can't you leave that junk for tomorrow?—At least wait until you can see what you're doing. Come on in here and sit down . . . fire's going now."

She went into the living room and eased herself onto the sofa beside him. "You win

. . . I mean, I really can't see what I'm doing. I'll leave it for later."

He lifted his arm around her shoulders. "Warm here, isn't it? It'll be a great day tomorrow . . . it couldn't miss."

He stared at the shotguns in the rack over the fireplace. *Funny, she hasn't used that twenty gauge in quite awhile . . . wonder if she remembers. Right now, I could probably make her forget about the house . . . floors . . . isn't that dumb? She doesn't work that way . . . anymore. . . .*

He pulled her closer to him. "What time are we going out tomorrow?—Shall I set the alarm?"

She looked up into his face, her eyes as green as the fog-covered mountain. "We've got the whole day if we don't make it out early."

He stood up from the couch. "I think I'll be up . . . why not let me wake you?" Stretching out his arms, he yawned, "Coming to bed?"

"Not yet, I want to stay up and think for awhile." It seemed a good excuse.

"All right, I'll put another log on for you. Don't stay up too long . . . you're liable to catch a draft." *Don't push it, he thought, as he went off to bed.*

Time . . . time . . . I need more time . . . to think . . . about everything. I couldn't go to sleep now . . . even if I wanted to. He told me that the woods gave him satisfaction . . . or was it the shooting? I felt it today . . . just on the short walk. I'm sure I felt it. There's something strange about it . . . like premonitions, or superstitions, something holding itself up against my skin . . . so I can feel it . . . and not feel it. I don't like it . . . not because it's his feeling . . . or maybe it is. . . .

She sat up for the rest of the night, thinking and half sleeping in a dream of logs . . . sparks . . . woods . . . and clear, strange smelling air. For a while she watched the firelight play on the stocks of the guns . . . guns. . . . *He said that when he shot, it was there with him . . . in the shooting, there's the feeling. . . . Master, he said, and clean . . . must be . . . like the fire . . . eats away at you . . . don't know it's gone . . . or quenched . . . until it happens. That's the freedom. . . . It's all in the shot . . . half-shot . . . big-shot . . . one-shot . . . master. . . .* The fire died down; Helen slept.

Mark was up first in the morning. "Come

on, night watchman. We're supposed to be going in a few minutes." He nudged her awake. *Damned suspicious mind she must have had last night.* "Coffee's on the stove if you want some now."

"Thanks . . . I guess I fell asleep last night. I didn't think I was tired at all." She rubbed the back of her neck as she scuffled into the kitchen. *I think I understand it now . . . I think. . . .*

The sun was almost up, and the thin, damp smell of harvest and dew pushed through the air toward the ridge. This morning they headed for the thickest part of the woods. Mark said there was always some game in there . . . not too many folks liked tramping through the heavy brush. He and Helen wore their canvas suits to keep the briars out of their skin. She used to think it was funny to get dressed up like this until she got a couple of good gashes in her thigh. She never minded going . . . seemed to enjoy herself as far as Mark could see. . . . And it had always been a good time.

He had taught her to handle the twenty gauge; she had a good ear for sounds, and a quick reflex action—he could expect her to take care of herself. "I hope you haven't forgotten what you knew." He turned toward her as she passed through the brush behind him.

"We'll see," she smiled back at him. She walked along parallel to him, carefully and quietly, being sure not to catch her feet on any of the vines that grew across the path. She could feel the breeze on her face and hands, soothing as a soft brush or spilled talcum. By this time, the sun was well up, and the rustling noises of the woods coming alive again played around inside her head. *Now I see why he liked to come up here . . . even the ground breathes. . . .*

Mark stood at the edge of a wide patch of underbrush and caught her attention. "Helen! Go around to the left and be ready to take the first shot."

She came down through the clearing, stood opposite him. "All ready. . . . I'll pace you." Every step was sure, and every sound grew louder in her concentration. She held the shotgun in front of her, finger at the safety, ready to slide to the trigger as soon as she shouldered the gun.

Thumping across the briars and junipers, Mark scared out a hare. "There he goes!" he shouted as quickly as he stopped. The shot

rang out and echoed back . . . the hare lay still. She hadn't forgotten.

"That was almost casier than I remember it being . . . if we can find him." She pointed to the edge of a fallen tree trunk. ". . . There."

Mark bent over and pulled the hare from the leaves. ". . . Be a shame for him to go to waste."

Helen smiled as she watched and released her tension a little at a time. "I think you were right about getting out of the house." She took a deep breath and stepped closer. *Master was what he had said.* "I can feel it. . ." *I can feel it growing. . .*

"I'm glad you think so now," he answered. "You may change your mind by the time we get back to the cabin." They were on level ground now, and walking farther along the paths.

"I don't mind it half so much as I thought I would." She put out her hand, "May I carry it? . . . After all. . ."

He laughed as he gave the hare to Helen. She was starting to be the same as she used to be. *She could be the same*, he thought as he watched her stuff the hare into the game pouch at the back of her jacket. "Let's move on down to the gulley . . . try the edge of the field. Not much'll stay here now."

They moved slowly, covering every inch of space between them. Mark kept his eyes to the right and left almost simultaneously. Helen looped her gun across her arm, and put her hands in her pockets. *It's funny*, she thought, *how much difference the fresh air can make. I probably should have come out here sooner . . . at least to clean up that cabin. . .*

Mark trampled the brush-piles and de-

cayed tree trunks . . . the next one would be his. "Helen," he waved through the trees to call her back to the path he had taken while she was daydreaming. "Over here. . . There's some ground cover I want to go through. Stand on the other side just in case?" He could call his shots easily, but not if the game darted out in the wrong direction.

"Be right there," she called from behind the fallen trees. *It's beginning to touch me again . . . I could almost feel great now myself . . . it's closing in . . . I can see it . . . I see what's wrong. . .* "All right. I'm ready."

He started slowly through the brush, his back toward her. She'd be able to see if anything ran out the other way. The wind picked up, but she felt warm, almost suffocating. Perhaps she had walked too much . . . it was the breeze pushing her. . . . *It's getting so hot . . . the trees are bending, but it's too hot. . .* She held the shotgun ready . . . *I can feel it choking me. . .*

"Mark!" she shouldered the gun and saw him spin around. "Here!" she squeezed . . . and the shot went white in front of her eyes. . . . He buckled, and fell into the junipers.

Then it started to come . . . the satisfaction. . . . *The . . . satisfaction . . . it's great . . . really. . . Now I'm clean . . . I'm free . . . like the fire. . .* She held the gun tightly and wiped her forehead with her sleeve. *I don't feel . . . anything . . . I could laugh . . . now . . . I can feel it. . .* "Do you know that?" she screamed. "I can feel it. And now . . . it's done!" She yelled at the top of her lungs as she ran down the slopes toward the cabin.

The cabin was empty now . . . she could run. . . . The wind would keep the feeling free . . . and sweep the dust away. . . .

The Connecticut Woman Who Jumped or Fell

Dorothy Lynsky, '64

The great MTA trains shape our lives.
Daily, people squash
 Cotton to wool
 Bracelet to button
 Holiness to sin
 Layer on layer
In the trains with the hollow ads staring down
 at them.
A lady pulls her purse and pretends
The man with the pushy briefcase
Isn't there.
Hundreds in dirty cars,
Each one a commuter-unto-himself,
Applauding his dominance;

“... there's no one here but me.
crowds are hateful, there's just
ME
until I get out of here
or get a seat.”

The pit turned red
When the Connecticut woman
Jumped or fell,
And grey and red waxed brilliant as
—just for an instant—
The crowd stood envious,
Then recovered as the lights went out.

Stillness . . .
The trains can look so still
With all the people out of them,
With the hollow ads staring
Only at the body.

The lady swings her purse at the briefcase
And says, “God have mercy on her soul!”
The man says, “Fool!”

THE WAR

Mary Ann McCarthy, '64

Sikhim stood at attention; his rifle weighed heavily on his shoulder and he longed to be free of it. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Krishna beside him. They were both fifteen but Krishna's height and his strong body made him seem a man while Sikhim, small and slender, might have passed as even younger than his age.

Sikhim tried to focus his attention on the maneuvers that he and the others were performing, but it soon wandered. He thought of school. We would be in chemistry class right now, he thought, experimenting and figuring out something good . . . something important. Then geometry class with Dr. Balim—Dr. Balim of the old, torn, brown jacket and the wonderful brain. What was it he said on that day a month ago? That terrible day when the school had been closed?

Sikhim had been standing in front of the mud-brick school building, staring morosely at it. The rest of the students had left early in the afternoon, many in a festive mood at being released from school. But Sikhim had waited, hoping with a dim sort of hope that the building would not really be barred and bolted. His small hope withered and died when the caretaker finally emerged from the building and nailed an X of wood over the front door. As he had stood there watching, Sikhim was sure that he could see through the windows the spirits of rust and decay already at work inside . . . but maybe it was only the shadows of twilight flickering on the walls. He had heard quick footsteps and turned to see Dr. Balim, his sharp little face peering out from beneath a huge cinnamon-colored turban. . . .

"Ah, I was sure that I would find you here," he had said, "and you have not disappointed me, Sikhim. Come, we must talk." And he set off at a rapid pace with such fast, shuffling little steps that Sikhim had to run to catch up with him. They had hurried across the market

place where the ever-present cows lazed here and there and the women in gold and emerald saris meandered among the near-empty stalls searching for late bargains. They stopped beside the town well and settled themselves on a clay bench. Dr. Balim had begun twisting one of his golden rings, seeming to center all his attention on them. But Sikhim knew that he was preparing to speak; if his movements were rapid and jagged, his words were precise and orderly.

"Sikhim, I have been recalled to my post at the University and I will be leaving soon, but I wanted to speak with you once more."

Sikhim recalled with pleasure the many discussions they had had after class, some of them lasting well into the evening so that he had to run all the way home. His aching muscles and the angry words of his parents had been a small price to pay for his entrance into a new world—the Doctor's world.

Dr. Balim had continued, "It is most unfortunate, this war, for everyone, but in a special way it is so for you. As you may have guessed, the scholarship that I have mentioned in class would have been yours."

Sikhim had guessed it, but still, his heart thumped wildly at the words he had waited so long to hear. The scholarship was his. No, there was something wrong—*would* have been . . . it *would have been* his. And then his heart slowed. It was a heavy pendulum weighing down his body.

Dr. Balim had gone on, "Do not forget, Sikhim, that education is important. It is more than important to us, for four-fifths of our people are illiterate. It is our duty to better ourselves and then to better them."

Sikhim had heard all this many times. It was the Doctor's favorite subject. But now he stemmed the flow of familiar words and squinted at him like a little wizened wise-man.

"Ah, Sikhim, but you know all this—too

well, I am afraid. And so, I must remind you that there is something else, something that I have not taught you, that you will learn by yourself and this war may help you. . . .”

“May help you . . . help you. . . .” The words had drummed in his head over and over again and now, marching in the blinding sunlight, Sikhim thought, help me learn! Ha! I do not want to know the things that war teaches, violence and treachery and death. His thoughts jammed to a halt as he collided with the back of the boy in front of him. The lines had stopped marching and were marking time. How stupid, he growled. How very stupid—this marching, this army, this war. And he hesitated before saluting the commanding officer, just a second, but the officer glared at him and raised an eyebrow.

After each of the officers had marched from the field in supreme dignity, the troops were dismissed, and Sikhim waited for his friend Tilah. Dusk dimmed the glaring sun a little as the two boys plodded home. Their gray shirts, hot and wet, stuck to their backs. Their feet, their legs, their arms ached dully. Tilah began, “Can you believe that we have been training for a month?”

“A month! It seems a year at the very least, a whole wasted year.” The bitterness sounded loudly in Sikhim’s voice. “When I think of what we could be doing, Tilah, it starts a fire inside me. We could be studying and learning, going somewhere and being somebody worthwhile.”

“That’s for you, Sikhim. I would have stayed here anyway, even if there was no war. I wanted to buy a farm and some animals. But you, you could have had a scholarship like the boy last year.”

Sikhim stared ahead directly into the red sun, not noticing its glare. “He is at the University now, studying government and” He broke off sharply and proceeded in silence for awhile.

Tilah said, “Well, you know, Sikhim, with this war and all, things have to be this way. It is good for us to be part of it all.”

“You are right, Tilah, so right,” a voice chimed in, a gay sounding voice. Krishna appeared beside them. He must be tired, thought Sikhim, but he moves easily as if no pain or weariness touches his body. And there is satisfaction, deep satisfaction in his face. Sikhim turned his eyes away abruptly and gazed out over the fields, pink in the

fading sunlight. Even the bright yellow flowers of the jute plants were rose-tinted. The boys had left the cluttered streets and houses of the town behind them and walked along the serpentine dirt road which wove through the farm land. The farmers led their oxen out of the fields toward the thatched stables while light and shadow darted everywhere.

“This is why we must train and fight,” murmured Krishna, and he paused by the side of the road. “It’s this land, so beautiful and so good. We’ve lived here for ages. We’ve tamed it, worked it, loved it. They won’t get it.” He thudded a powerful fist into his palm.

Sikhim glared angrily at the others. Tilah seemed overcome with Krishna’s enthusiasm and nodded rapidly in agreement. Krishna, spurred on by his own words was exultant. An urge flared up in Sikhim to erase the exultation. “You sound like a poet, Krishna, but are you sure that you don’t want war only for the excitement of battle, so that you may use your strength to fight and even . . . to kill? This is not what we have learned is right.”

Krishna’s eyes showed astonishment, then pain and at last became thoughtful. “Do you remember, Sikhim, the day that we smiled as we watched the ceremony of the Jains? They poured their tribute of vermilion and crushed poppies and bananas over the head of their huge idol, staining him a blood red color. They could not use real blood, for they cannot kill any living thing. We smiled then as we talked of them because they are so extreme and because we are not like them. Have you become a Jain, Sikhim? Is that why you speak as you do, or is there, maybe, another reason?”

Krishna paused for a moment and his next words were sharp and strong and clear. “I want war, not for the reasons you have mentioned, Sikhim, but to remove the enemy from our lands. He is encroaching more each day. If I must kill, I will do it because it is the act of a soldier, of a man. I will not run away from manhood or from war. I think that none of us should.”

Anger gripped Sikhim so fiercely that his voice died. He felt the redness spread all through him as he stomped away from the others. When he came to the yard of his house he brushed by the cream-colored jute fibers, drying on the branches of a scrawny tree, and scattered them here and there. Only

later, during his dinner meal did the violent feelings seep out of him. Then he rested.

That evening Sikhim sat under the stars with his parents. The younger children were in bed and he could hear their chatter growing softer and softer as they dropped off to sleep. It was one of those rare times when neither his mother nor father had some small task to do.

"How is the military company?" his father asked.

Sikhim answered with a smile, "We are becoming fierce and warlike, father." He noticed his mother's head jerk up.

"No more than necessary, I hope," she murmured and she peered at him closely. "I wish, my son, that you were back in your school."

Sikhim was pleased at her words. "I wish it too, mother. Then I would have the scholarship and an education at the University. I would be of use not only to my country but also to my family. We would move, mother—out of this little cottage and into the city."

His mother said softly, "No, no, I would not want to leave."

"Well, then we would have a better house here, more land. . . ."

Absently she nodded and said, "That would be nice, that would be nice." But Sikhim didn't feel that she meant it. He was confused.

"Wouldn't you like things to be that way, mother?"

His mother paused, then began slowly, "No, son, it is not necessary for things to be that way; they are good now."

"But, mother, you said that you wished that I was in school. All these things would follow."

"My son, I want you to be in school because I know that you are not happy in the military company. If you were happy there, I, too, would be pleased. We want no miracles from you, only your respect and your love. We are happy as we are."

Sikhim spun around to face his father, hoping for a different response. He only nodded in agreement and Sikhim was truly bewildered. Then anger again sprang up in him and he thought, if they want to remain in a cave when there is sunlight outside, if they want to think what they have is important, let them. There is more to life than this. Dr. Balim and others have said so. And

if I have the opportunity, I will go and find it. His anger softened to sadness. But I do not have the opportunity.

Sikhim wandered away from his parents toward the clump of tamarisks set far back from the road. He sat there on the earth with the moonlight and the chirping sounds of night around him trying to rid himself of the bitterness he had felt for so long—a whole month now, a month of marching, shooting at targets, presenting arms, standing at attention, surrounded by a group of boys all as falsely patriotic and bloodthirsty as Krishna. A month of this with anger always in his heart, and now . . . he was weary of it and longed to set his painful burden aside. But how?

He thought of the ideal. He could picture himself being called out of the ranks and led to the commanding officer's quarters. There he was, standing in defiance before the older man who would say, "Dr. Balim has told me about you, Sikhim. The Doctor is now in charge of strategic planning for the government and has asked that you be given a scholarship to come to the University to study under him. If you want the scholarship, it is yours." Sikhim could see himself thanking the officer and leaving the room enveloped in a cloud of pleasure. And then, once outside the door, he could see Dr. Balim twisting his golden ring and peering at him through squinted eyes. "So you have accepted it, Sikhim. I wondered whether you would. Apparently you have not learned yet the 'something' that I mentioned." And he shook his turbaned head sadly and faded as a picture of the land sharpened into focus. Sikhim saw himself walking on the familiar road, hemmed in on both sides by the broad fields. They were golden in the strong sun of midday and full of activity, that of men and animals, of plants and insects. Sikhim remembered Krishna's praise of the land. It might just possibly have been sincere. And in his new frame of mind, the possibility grew to probability. He thought of Tilah and his calm acceptance of the war and of life in general. Was it just the indifferent reaction of a slow-witted boy or was there some wisdom in it? He recalled the words of his parents and their happiness with nothing . . . or maybe it was something.

I don't know . . . I don't know . . . I don't know . . . ran on in his head. I don't know for sure if they are right, if they have some-

thing that I don't have. If it were chemistry, I would know, or algebra. But I feel that they have and I feel that I, too, may have it soon.

Sikhim stood up and stretched the soreness from his body. As he left the grove and headed toward the small cottage, he felt a hint of morning in the air though dawn was still a few hours away. His head was light and his mind, tired, but a persistent thought demanded attention. What would I have said to the commanding officer about the scholarship? Would I have weakened? Would I

have stumbled in my speech? What would I have done? And the answer came—I would have refused it; thank you, sir, but I'll hope for another opportunity at another time. Right now I should be here in this company. I don't want to run away . . . no, that's too childish. Krishna would know how to say it right and mean it. He would say it in a manly way. Just for a moment Sikhim was disturbed but then he remembered. What Krishna knows, I will know too.

And there was Dr. Balim nodding in affirmation.

The Becoming

Eileen Sullivan, '64

Jody looked around him. There were people—people everywhere, more people than in the whole state of Tennessee, he guessed. Panic gripped him as he wondered which of the laughing or grim were his relatives. How would he know them? It was warm, damp and foggy, but there was still some snow left. He stood on the platform for a few minutes wondering what to do. Then he edged his way through the seramble with his cloth suitcase in one hand, and in the other, the lunch his mother had packed for him last night before he left. So far this afternoon, he hadn't been hungry, but he had bought two boxes of salty popcorn because it lasted a long time; he figured about fifty miles a box.

Most of the way he had been drowsy, but when he wasn't, he watched the train tracks as they seemed to switch, and he watched with resentment the people his father would have called bigshots; they puffed greedily on store-bought cigarettes, they laughed so that everyone in the car should know how much they enjoyed themselves, yet, they looked fresh and clean and stiff. His own suit, one his Ma had fixed over from his Pa's wedding suit, was still big in the shoulders and baggy in the legs, but he had room to grow in, his

mother had said. Besides, it was better than anyone else had in Bush Mountain.

When he entered the station, he froze at the gate. It was so big that he couldn't see from where he was to the end. And there were dark people in long silk robes, people he had seen only in the picture books Maudie Simson, his teacher, had lent him. There were niggers too, like the ones in the lowlands at home, but even these were different, with their gay laughter and light-hearted walks; and sloe-eyed Japanese women passed him with their mincing gaits and elacking chatter. Jody wondered if there were very many white people in New York City. He leaned his long skinny frame against the doorway.

"Where's the snack bar, Sonny?"

"I don't know." Jody blushed when the man turned out not to be Uncle Joe. When another lady asked for the subway, he pointed in the direction opposite him; any answer was better than none, he figured.

"Are you Jody Ames?" a deep voice came from behind him.

"Uncle Joe?"

"Yes, Son, and this is your Aunt Mae, and your cousins Susan and Fred."

Jody nodded shyly and said "Howdy Do."

He noticed their starched clean look, and the flowery smell that made his Aunt Mae unlike his mother.

"We brought this jacket of Daddy's for you because it's so damp outside. Mommy says that you probably never saw snow. How do you like it?" Susan chattered.

"No, we don' git much snow down thar," he muttered with his father's labored accent. Frustrated at his feelings of ignorance and embarrassment, Jody snatched the coat from her and pulled it on.

"You talk funny!" Susan giggled.

"Susan!" her father shook his finger. Jody thought she looked like a pink fairy child enveloped in white bunny fur.

Fred looked like a shorter, fatter rendition of his father and he had sore red blemishes on his face. Joe put five tokens in the turnstile and they pushed through the frightening closeness of people onto another train. They said they lived only two stops from the station so it wasn't worth battling the morning traffic with the car. Little of what they said made sense to Jody. The air underground was foul and smoke-filled; someone near him reeked of whiskey.

At Bush Mountain, Jody's mother went about her daily chores. She had skimmed the cream from the milk pail and was churning it into butter for dinner.

"Where do you think Jody is now, Ma?" Lolly the littlest ran her finger inside the cornbread batter.

"I reckon he's in New York b'now; prob'ly met Mae an' them too."

"Do you think Jody might like it there an' never come home ever again?" a tear rolled down her face and onto her neck.

"Of course he'll come back! Now don't you go gittin' all red-eyed an' puffy. Jody's all right. Here, put this butter in the ice box. Pa an' the boys are near-starved, I'm so far behind in my work," she touched her eyes with the corner of her apron when Lolly had toddled away. "C'mon fellas, dinner's ready."

"Them ham hocks smell good, Jessie."

"Thank ya, Pa. Now eat up good everybody; I want to finish up this mess so's I kin write to Jody this afternoon."

So Jessie wrote a friendly, inquisitive and loving letter, telling about the corn sowing, asking him about the city and all about the relatives.

It was on the dining room table Tuesday

afternoon when Jody came home from swimming meet practice with Fred. Without speaking, he snatched it and ran upstairs to his room. The envelope still smelled like the grain thrash that sifted through the mountains in the spring. He walked over to the window streaked gray with last week's snow. When he tried to picture his family, they seemed not a part of him at all, and their faces were blurred and far away like the cars looked from the dirty window. Four-thirty. He and his Pa used to be finishing up the milking now. He wondered if his cow, Beulah, missed his frequent slaps. Suddenly, his room seemed too bright and over-cheerful, the bed too well-made, the chair too soft—so he lay on the cool waxed floor and cried, crumpling the unopened letter in his fist.

He could hear Mae walking back and forth in the kitchen below. She always set the table as though company were coming. Everything was flimsy and shining. His Ma would have liked that stuff, but she probably would never have it. He sat at the desk then and began his letter.

Dear Ma,

This here city is like a circus. It's hot an the noises never stop night or day. Did Pa an the kids finish the sowin? Does anyone help him with Beulah? She never did let anyone milk her but me. . . .

No one had called him to supper. Joe's soft rumble and Fred's higher tones were punctuated with clinking silverware. It gave him an eerie feeling of being talked about. A milk bottle crashed to the floor accompanied by reprimands and Susan's "I didn't mean to," and finally the quiet happy lull of after supper television. He put his head down on the desk for a while but woke suddenly when he heard Susan scuffling toward his room. Jody hunted for a secret place for his letters. Just as she knocked and peeked around the door, he hid them under the blotter.

"May I come in Jody?" the fairy child's voice was pleading.

"Wal, I was gonna . . . wal, I guess so."

"I got some chocolate cake and some milk too, if you let me come in."

"I said come on in . . . but"

"But what?"

"Oh, nuthin'," he said peevishly, at the same time happy to be visited.

Susan edged her way into the room balancing the plate and glass shakily. "How come you didn't come to supper, Jody?"

"I didn't feel like it," he said, eyeing her as he licked frosting off his fingers.

"Oh. It didn't feel like supper without you down there. I spilled a whole quart of milk, you know. Boy, was Daddy mad."

"I heard."

"Jody?"

"Yeah."

"Will you tell me a story?"

"Isn't it your bedtime?"

"I still have some more minutes."

So Jody sat on the too soft chair and pulled her onto his lap.

"Well?"

"I'm trying to think. How 'bout Cindy rella?"

"No, Jody, I heard that one millions of times."

"Red Ridin' Hood?"

"Uh uh," she shook her head vehemently.

"O.K. I'll make one up."

"Once thar was a boy who came to the biggest city in the world . . ."

"You, Jody?"

"Nope. Wal, anyhow, he lived with his relatives, sorta like me and he missed everything about his home; his Ma, 'cause she was . . . wal, 'cause she was his Ma."

Susan nodded in agreement.

"An' he missed his Pa 'cause his Pa taught him how to fish and hunt and farm; an' 'cause he was funny too, the way he'd laugh when a bull chased his son across the field. Why, he nearly died laughing the night Lolly stuffed her brother Tom's nose and ears with lard."

"Really? How did he breathe?"

"Oh, I don't know, I guess he found a way."

"Did your mother laugh too, Jody?"

Jody looked at her suspiciously, "No, she

didn't. She got all excited when Tom woke everyone up yellin' his head off, and the more Pa laughed, the more jittery she got. Finally she threw a whole fistful of lard at him and then all of them laughed for the longest time."

"That must have been something!"

"Yeah, but the time when Lolly got asthma an' couldn't breathe, his Pa carried her down to the doc in the valley—five miles down the worst road in Tennessee without movin' a muscle. Ma, she made pretend that thar warn't nuthin' wrong, an' she kept everyone so busy they forgot to be scared."

"And what about the relatives?" Susan yawned sleepily.

Just then, Mae called up the stairs, "Susan, you get to bed now, and don't forget to brush your teeth! I'll be up in a few minutes."

"Quick, Jody, tell me about them."

"No, not tonight, I have to think about that story too. Maybe tomorrow night."

"Promise?"

"O.K., promise."

He sat there quietly until he heard her patter into her bedroom. He went to his desk. It wasn't so bad here . . . and besides, gittin' an education of the world takes time. I guess I gotta give it a chance. He tore up what he had written and began his longest letter again.

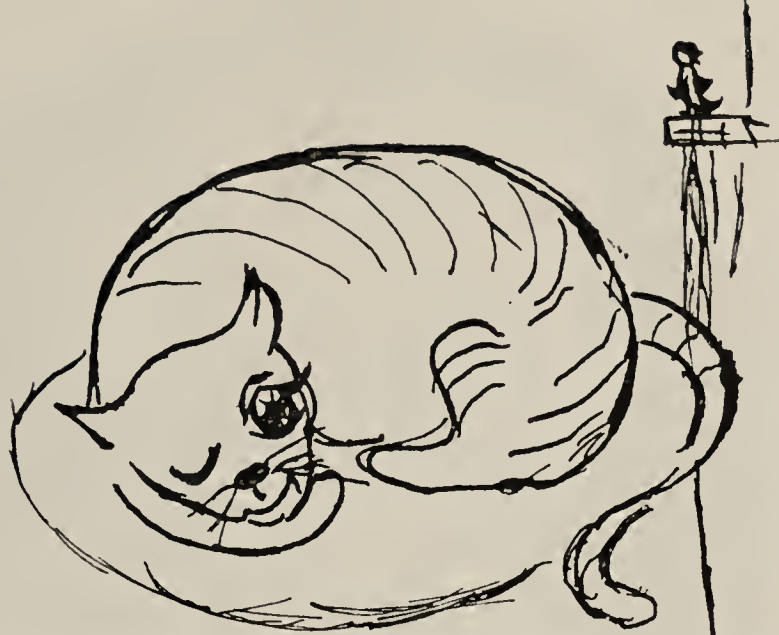
Dear Ma,

I like this here big city fine. Ol' Tennessee don't have nuthin' like this un. The lights beep on an' off all night outside my window. . . .

When he had finished, he undressed and pulled on his fresh, clean, stiff pajamas. He wondered if his Pa would think he looked like a bigshot. It didn't really matter, he just wondered.

The Curious Cat and the Cute Little Canary

Diane Allenberg, '64



Cat Seemuch saw much from his desk one hundred-thirty-three stories above noisy Park Avenue. Even when he napped his daily cat nap, he kept one lid open, fearful lest he should miss any eventful event.

One afternoon while Cat Seemuch was pawing his curtain back in place so he could see more, he saw a cute little canary connoitering on the ledge of the 133rd story of the Reach for the Sky Building across the street.

“Quick!” he called to his fellow co-cats. “There’s a cute little canary standing on the Ledge of the Reach for the Sky Building one hundred thirty-three stories up. You cats, call the cops.”

And then he fled: down the one hundred thirty-three flights, across the furious flow of traffic, up the one hundred thirty-three flights and out to the cute little canary on the ledge of the 133rd story of the Reach for the Sky Building.

“Hail to thee blithe spirit,” mewed Seemuch in his milkiest mew. “Are you a damsel in distress?”

The cute little canary looked down at Seemuch disdainfully. “What are you—some kind of a nut or something?” she chirped.

Then she pompously puffed herself up. Seemuch, thinking that this was the be-all and the end-all here, reached out to rescue her, but just then the cute little canary fluttered her feathers and flew off, leaving Seemuch reaching for the empty air.

The cops finally came. They were just in time to carry away the crumpled corpse of the cat while the cute little canary looked down at them from her perch on the 133rd floor of the Reach for the Sky Building.

MORAL: Cats who live in glass houses see much pain.

The Square Caveman and His Scrawny Mouse

Diane Allenberg, '64

Once upon the empty void there clicked a square caveman whose only fellow-like square was a scrawny mouse. This caveman was christened Sapiens, but the rest of the chicks and the cats just called him Sap for short.

One day Big Daddy called Sap up to his pad.

“Like man,” he let him have it cold, “you’re square—like ya not really swingin’ with the rest of the cats. It’s a hang up if you don’t bug out.”

Sap wasn’t really flip over the idea, but he took his scrawny mouse and they began bopping across the blank void. After a while they really began gassin’ it up. They got real hip about “Do it Yourself” gags, and soonville Sap and his scrawny mouse had themselves like a real gone pad, not like them caves, but way out with windows and doors—Coolsville. He dug up a slip of a chick also cut out four cornered. Then, since the man, the mouse, and the more had made their rack, they decided they’d better cool in it. They did and lived happily ever bopland.

MORAL: Things ain’t always as they appear, sometimes there’s more to the jazz of the square.



The Comeback

Under the bridge a troll's been waiting . . .
five years since the road closed.
his feet are grey with cold. Only his eye moves
lidless in a groove repeating.
If it would shut human—
he could cry out or sleep.
But he's part of a fiction
even the weather cannot cancel . . .
so he waits.

When grass fired the water green
(in a warmer time)
he sat with reason. Black cars
bumped boards over the bridge once. . . .
While father read the comics
children would run to shout him out
 TROLL
 three
 o'clock
 afternoons
through ant-burnt planks above his head . . .

It's a Monday morning now—
hardly a matter of getting up for him—
the troll is thinking
as he re-fits his knee
to the hollow beneath his chin.
(Meanwhile, three miles
the other side
of the new black asphalt highway. . . .)

In that full hour before waking
Stephen J. lay in a lovely balance
Feeling grass mountains firm under his head.
Light slicing through the shades
hesitated like a raw butterfly on his lids as
(careful not to crush the town around him on the spread)
 He stretched.

Another Stephen opens his eyes
deciding not to wince
even in the face of the snow-bloated sun
until he goes to bed.
The day's resolved in neat brown parcels
as he knots his narrow tie—
cereal in a box,
three kisses down the steps for
 Ellen,
 Lisa,
 Tish—
off in a grey hum. . . .

The day's unsettling to
(back under the bridge)
the troll—hearing
higher than the wood stumps
along the dirt road
Stephen's car invisible
on the highway sawing leaves.

The brook's frozen—not one threat of motion.
He could list so many things wrong.
First,
that car. . . .
Untroll-like he's caught a cold.
His nerves are bad.

In Stephen's office there's
an in box and an out
staying pretty much even.
For lunch he has
hot-cardboard coffee
and one carefully-wrapped sandwich
sent up.

It's a strain reading foot-notes
when the light gets thin around four
and it's too soon for the desk lamp.
As he jiggles the blinds
to hoard light a while—
Stephen sees
a fog face
heavy in the black glass—
notices
they're making eights across the street
on ice leaking back into woods
under the bridge to the troll—restless.

Snow-light shrivels; the sun falls flat.
A coaching tree chameleon-shapes the dark—
tonight's a troll
humped alive over the white brook of road.
The troll decides he'll run off or
(it's been five years)
at least moving slow—steady
he can make it
to where the highway turns
into the dirt road.
Then—fingers unknotting slow—
he'll stash the painted words behind a bush—
Detour this way—the quiet error of a one-way sign
straight up.

He's waiting now under the bridge
not for that grand catastrophe.
(He'd forgotten the ant-burnt planks above his head.)
There's rising action as
Stephen J. starts home
on time
to Ellen, Lisa, Tish. On the highway
black by six
it's easy to turn off wrong
down a dirt road. He could hear
it coming, spinning through the rotted boards,
settling into tin leaves on ice.
There was hardly time to wince.
Stephen J. crumpled
head-toe
back before waking
in the eye of the troll.

For the troll—a recognition—an extra.
He had wanted only
the road open
Sunday afternoons. Could he manage this?
They'd write it up in screech-high columns
(of course) with pictures of Ellen, Lisa, Tish.
There'd be questions—
in a hard light questions
and answers—
For the record they'd decide:
"It appears, no doubt—
how on a clear night. . . ."
In the end he'd get full credit.
They'd hesitate—then confirm:
"It was a troll."

Joyce Hallisey, '63

The Ungrammatical Princess

Karen Caruso, '64

Far beyond the glass mountains, even past the plain of suede and buckram, lay the kingdom of Lyricana, a land of extraordinary wealth and beauty. The people of Lyricana were prosperous, happy, and extremely literate. No country in the universe boasted such well-fed and well-read citizens. The country abounded in poets, novelists, debaters, and the like.

This unusual preoccupation with language came from a deep feeling of patriotism. Some time long past, a sage had said, "If you really love the father-land, you will want to master the mother-tongue."

The king had heard it. "Such wisdom!" he replied. "Let this be the law of the land." It became domestic policy.

The country was presently ruled by an aged couple, King Homer and his gracious wife, Caliope. They were blessed with a lovely daughter, the princess Moira, on whom they lavished love and gifts. They were enormously wealthy.

Unfortunately, there was a single thorn in the side of the royal couple. Their daughter, the princess, had just passed her fifteenth birthday and was, as yet, unbetrothed—doomed, apparently, to a life of spinsterhood.

This was no small concern to the aged couple—nor to the citizens—for unless there was a successor to the throne, the country would lose its sovereignty and become a mere province. And that meant taxes.

In addition to her grace and beauty, Moira had tremendous wealth. Daily servants ar-

rived bearing coffers of silk, precious metals, and jewels. So great was the store that a separate palace had to be built in which to keep her riches.

And still the princess was unwed, for in spite of her many assets, she had one flaw. She was ungrammatical. This, in a land where children were soundly spanked for using a double negative, or sent to bed without supper for letting an "ain't" slip by. Where even the wizards, when casting spells or engaging in similar unnatural activities, took care that their doggerel scanned correctly and conformed to the classic concepts of rhyme and rhythm.

The king and queen were sore distressed. Spinsterhood—how dreadful! Often during the day, the king would pause in his royal duties and walk to the terrace overlooking the garden where the princess sat with her tutors. Leaning carelessly against the wrought-platinum railing, he would watch for a while, marvelling at her loveliness and wishing she were married. The case seemed hopeless. Suitor upon suitor had appeared to try for her hand. He would be dazzled by her beauty, entranced by her wealth, prepared to lay down his life for her sake. Then the inevitable would happen. She would say something—completely shattering all the rules of grammatical construction. The suitor would gasp, shiver with distaste, then dash from her presence.

The king remembered the last one. The suitor was Egroeg, crown prince of Sirrom,



one of the recently developed countries on the Dark Continent. He had been liberally and faultlessly educated at Oxford.

The princess had received her guest in her garden. The blooming young prince was quite taken aback by her beauty; he knelt and proclaimed his undying devotion; he even praised her bluebells.

"I say, what lovely blooms!"

The princess smiled. "Yes, they are quite fulsome, aren't they?"

Behind the arras, the tutors groaned. "*Handsome, Your Highness—handsome.*" But there was more. The princess was warming to her subject.

"And I done all the work myself," she continued. (The crown prince frowned.) "You see the court is so noissome. . . ."

The tutors writhed in agony. "Noisy, noisy!"

". . . that I spend as much time as I can out here. I think hobbies relaxes one. Don't you agree?"

By now, the prince was backing away. "If you'll excuse me . . . a matter of state. . . ." He turned and fled, muttering dire predictions for ladies of fifteen who take spirits.

It was like that every time. The king and queen were desperate. They couldn't have an unwed daughter. It wasn't regal. What was to be done?

Many men of wisdom were consulted con-

cerning the matter. The best grammarians and rhetoricians were brought in. The grammarians drilled her on the rudiments of syntax. They explained carefully the agreement of subject and predicate, the use of expletives, the position of modifiers. The rhetoricians pointed out the structural possibilities of the tongue. They stressed the necessity for organization and development. And the linguists came in droves. They spoke of the history of their language, its development, its subtleties, its noble origins. On and on. Theories—parallels—metaphors. It was to no avail. The royal family sank into a despondency. A cobalt cloud covered the land. Time passed.

One day, two men came riding through the kingdom. The younger was Nerak of Osurac, a crown prince of the blood, noted for his charm, valor, and cleverness. With him was an unusual fellow. He was of some indeterminate age, about six feet seven inches tall, and weighed perhaps six stone. He was quite slim. On his head he wore a cylindrical hat about thirteen inches tall. It was chartreuse and bespattered with Prussian-blue six-pointed stars. His cloak was Prussian-blue and spattered with chartreuse six-pointed stars. He looked like a pole. His name was Pindar, the Wizard; and he was confidante and advisor to the prince.

Since the cobalt-blue was becoming car-

bon-black, the Wizard suggested they put up for the night. "We are close upon the palace of the aged king Homer and his gracious wife Caliope. And I am saddle sore. Let us stay the night."

Nerak agreed. He could not confess that he, too, was saddle sore. That would be unbecoming a crown prince. So he said, "Ah, yes. The horses are weary. We will seek shelter for the night with the royal family of Lyricana."

They approached the castle and were immediately and profusely welcomed by the gracious couple.

"Welcome noble prince. And you, too, honorable advisor."

Pindar preened. He dearly loved flattery. He determined that the stay should be a pleasant one. The guests were fed, then shown to their rooms.

The king said graciously, "Rest now; we will socialize on the morrow." He left his guests and hurried away. There was a scheming gleam in his eye. He headed for the princess' suite.

The next morning, after a most tasty and nourishing repast, Nerak of Osurac was brought to meet the princess. Nerak was not at that particular moment in the market for a wife. But one look at the princess Moira sufficed to turn his thoughts from the yet unexplored valley to the glowing hearth and slippers. He bent to kiss her hand. He praised her beauty, her magnificence, her charm. The princess did not reply. Nerak thought, "Modest and demure, too! Ah, what a wealth I have found." He marveled that she had remained so long unbetrothed. He took his leave and pranced away, a Souza march on his lips. He went into the hills to bask in the blue mist and compose sonnets.

The princess watched him go. She, too, was entranced. Such dash, such poise, such exquisite diction! At this she wept. How could she possibly win Nerak. She had only to open her mouth to drive him thither. What would be her slip? A dangling participle? A fractured idiom? She could see it now. She groaned in chagrin; then she decided. She would not see him again. Better that than to watch his horrified face—then his back as he dashed away.

Nerak returned from the hills. Clutching his sonnets in his fists, he raced to the palace. The guards barred him from the princess' garden. "The princess will not receive you," they said.





"She wishes you to depart the land, never to return."

Nerak was crushed. He walked dispiritedly out into the cold blue fog, humming Chopin's "Prelude in C Minor" under his breath. Then he sought his wizard—to seek counsel. "Ah, woe is me, Pindar. The princess has rejected my suit. She will not see me. Alas, all is lost. It is the work of a fiend. I charge you to set things aright."

"Becalm yourself," replied Pindar. "Else I cannot concentrate upon my scansion."

"Are you conjuring?"

"Merely getting to the heart of the matter. A little introspection."

"Wrong usage," said the prince automatically. "Don't use your words so literally."

"I shall use them as I choose," replied the Wizard, raising his left eyebrow. "Would you care to debate the point?"

"Oh debate, schmate!" answered Nerak. "All this diction and rhetoric gives me a pain."

"Precisely!" replied Pindar, chortling with glee.

"Precisely what? Pindar! Are you getting foggy?"

"I beg your pardon! I was referring to the princess. This is her difficulty; she is ungrammatical. That is what drove the suitors away and why she is fifteen and, as yet, unbetrothed. It's what she is afraid to let you see. She doesn't want you to leave her."

"But I didn't leave her. She kicked me out!"

"It's not the same thing," answered Pindar loftily.

"Well, what do I do now?"

"I'm sure you know. Go to her now. I will sit here and contemplate the inevitable outcome. Hurry."

The prince raced back to the garden, singing the "Soldiers' Chorus" at the top of his voice.

The guards stopped him at the gate. "The princess will not receive you," they said again.

Nerak ignored them. He entered the garden. The princess was there tending her bluebells. Nerak ran up to her.

"Good day, fair one."

Moirra turned in dismay. Nerak kissed her hand; then glanced at her flowers.

"Those is lovely bluebells," he said.

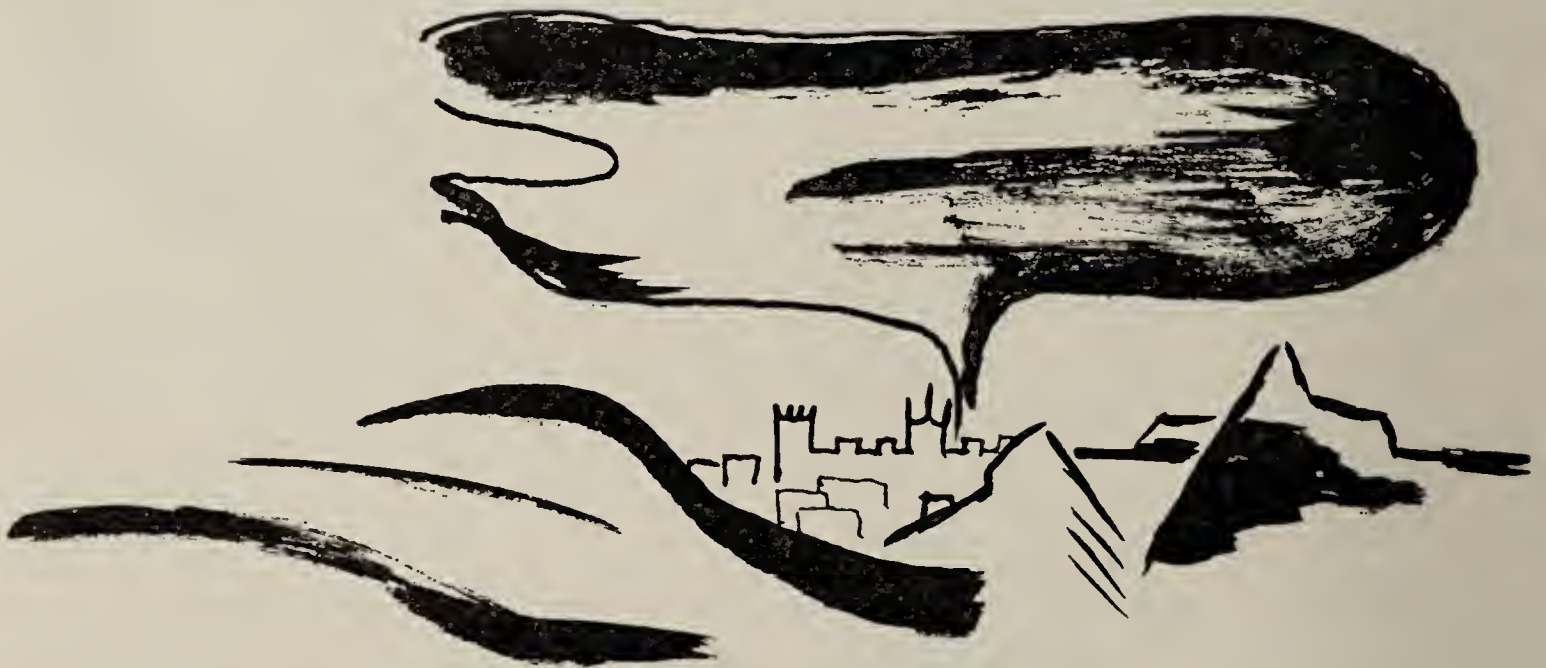
The princess gasped.

"What did I say?" he stammered, his face contorted. "Didn't my predicate agree? Oh, forgive me."

"Forgive you? I'd like to kiss you."

"Oh joy!" he exclaimed. "Let us approach your father."

The wedding was a grand success. When it was over, the young couple rode off toward the east. They were going to Osurac, where Pindar would join them later in his new official capacity as marriage counselor. When they turned for a last look at Lyricana, they saw the blue cloud go back up to the sky where it belonged.



Thee End



The Circus of the Sun. Robert Lax. New York: Journeyman Books, 1960.

The Circus of the Sun is a paperback volume of poems forming one poem. It is a poem of the light and fullness of creation, of the circles and cycles of things, and of the tensions and precarious equilibrium of man in the midst of creation. The epigram is from Proverbs 8, 22-27: "I was set up from eternity, And of old, Before the earth was made. . ." The first lines propose:

*Sometimes we go on a search
And do not know what we are looking
for,
Until we come again to our beginning.*

Morning, afternoon, evening, midway, night, are the divisions of the poem. It develops in images of circles, light, stresses and balances, moments: from the quest lines above, through the compasses of creation, the fields of morning under the last few stars and the setting up of the circus. The circus is explored in scenes, persons, performances, and lyric reflections on it all, moving through the fullness of day to nightfall. In the progression there is a strong sense of permanence, of cycle:

*By day I have circled like the sun,
I have leapt like fire.*

*At night I am a wise-man
In his Palanquin.*

*By day I am a juggler's torch
Whirling brightly.*

The abundant *many* are sensed to be somehow very really *one*. The last poem sums up the plethora of the circus creation in the last words, wonder-struck:

*Have you seen the noon-day banners
Of this wedding?*

The development throughout is leisurely as a summer's day. The elicited visions are lightsome, almost hazy with light, with an occasional silhouette-clear focus, and all highly empathetic:

*We the innocent grasses stand on tiptoe
overshouldering
each other, looking toward the circle's
center,
middle of the field where they stretch
the skyworks.
Birds dart over us, pulling shadows
through us.*

The flavor of this poetry is faith: the affirmation of goodness and beauty, a certain enthusiasm of acceptance together with explicit acknowledgment of authority:

*The circus is a song of praise,
A song of praise unto the Lord.*

The *persona* poems succeed charmingly in portraying character and catching the moment. Some are obvious: "Dog Act," "Snake

Charmer," "Ortans." Some are deeper: "Acrobat about to Enter," "Penelope and Mogador," "Rastelli." There is a gentle surety to the humor, a sort of vintage quality to the faith, and a viability of perspective in the book that suffuses it with lyric grace.

Kathleen Marotta, '64

All My Pretty Ones. Anne Sexton. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1962.

The flavor of Miss Sexton's poems is agnostic: "Need is not quite belief." Her preoccupation is not with light and creation, but with disillusion and death. Some of her titles are: "The Truth the Dead Know," "The Abortion," "The Hangman," "Woman with a Girdle," "Old." She specifically refrains from the kind of ultimate affirmation expressed in *The Circus of the Sun*. Her poems are primarily images and statements of ugliness, emptiness, acute pain and futility of seeking in a numb, Eliot-gray manner.

Three of the poems, "Old," "The House," and "The Fortress" fuse into an attitude akin to that of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," and Archibald MacLeish's *JB*, a kind of "sugar-coated nihilism." It amounts to the clasping to oneself of some meaningful specific, in the face of the universal meaningless; "Ah, love, let us be true to one another! etc." Other poems seem to be a misconstruction of things due to the exigencies of the particular poem or sentiment. For example, in "With Mercy for the Greedy," Miss Sexton says:

*My friend, my friend, I was born
doing reference work in sin, and born
confessing it. This is what the poems
are:
with mercy
for the greedy,
they are the tongue's wrangle,
the world's pottage, the rat's star.*

Even conceding the difficulties of living with sin and of defining poetry, to respect this sort of statement is difficult. If it is not quite a lie, it is yet not quite honest. Life and art are more than is here acknowledged or even permitted. Such shortsightedness is unwarranted. This abbreviated vision contrasts with the moment in *Macbeth* (whence Miss

Sexton titles her volume) in being far less adequately justified and much less manly than Macduff's valiant grief.

However, some of the poems transcend this uncreative, not to say inattentive, appreciation of reality. Sometimes this happens with *en passant* felicity:

*To be drunk is to be intimate with a
fool.
I will try it shortly.
. . . I have worn
Your cross, hung with package string
around my throat.
It tapped me lightly as a child's heart
might,
tapping secondhand, softly waiting to
be born.*

Some of the poems defeat the oppressive Absurdity by intense absorption in some particular vision of good. The difference between this and Arnold's "love, let us be true," is the implication about the Great Absurd: not resignation to its brutal meaninglessness, but the inattention of one who cannot solve the Absurdity-Problem and is momentarily captivated by some thing definitely delightful, meaningful, excellent.

A certain *respect*—in the speaker-poet and in the reader—is established, with a certain *reality* (which is that which is respected). Here at last comes the assertion: not the warm, bright faith of Robert Lax, but the agnostic minimum of irreducible good faith and good will that makes life viable, the elementary trust and acceptance.

*. . . the orange letters that spell
ORIENT on the life preserver
that hangs by my knees;
the cement lifeboat that wears
its dirty canvas coat;
the faded sign that sits on its shelf
saying KEEP OFF.
Oh, all right, I say,
I'll save myself.*

Sighting four nuns on deck, the poet regards them out of her sober, rock-bottom emptiness, for a while, and at length expresses this startling and delightful desire (being a person of will, as noted):

*O God,
Although I am very sad,
could you please*

let those four nuns
loosen from their leather boots
and their wooden chairs
to rise out
over this greasy deck,
nodding their pink heads to one side,
flying four abreast
in the old-fashioned side-stroke
each mouth open and round,
breathing together
as fish do,
singing without sound.

After the rather dismal precedents, "This is how I want to die," "Father, father, I wish I were dead," this relief from anguish, this actual creativity, is especially lovely: *creative absurdity*.

Whereas Mr. Lax's limitations are those intrinsic to man, human knowledge, and words, Miss Sexton is further constrained, in creating the language of the meaningful, by the dilemma of doubt. There is potential infinity to cries of grief and songs of joy, which partake of the potential infinity of human experience and utterance. But statements of aftermath, staleness, anticlimax, emptiness, insignificance, are strictly limited in possibility, in interest, in meaning.

Given their respective situations, each of these poets has acquitted himself well. Nevertheless, as Mr. Lax's poetry may be inaccessible or implausible to the agnostic, to the sensibility of acceptance Miss Sexton comes overconstrained. The authority of intense human feeling will inform, will validate poetry of doubt—but not forever. The truest poetry speaks the affirmative vision, looking on things and seeing that they are good.

Kathleen Marotta, '64

Voices in the Snow. Olga Andreyev Carlisle.
New York: Random House, 1962.

Mrs. Carlisle's book is a literary record of her recent visit to Russia and of her exchange of ideas with prominent voices in contemporary Russian fine arts. One advantage, both for her immediate acceptance by her new Russian acquaintances and for our enjoyment of her remarkably unbiased view-

point, is that she is not a "foreigner" trying, with one exposure, to picture the artists of a new culture. Rather, Mrs. Carlisle is the granddaughter of Andreyev, a great name in the history of Russian letters. Raised in a circle of Russian émigrés who settled in France and kept vital almost every aspect of homeland custom, Mrs. Carlisle's return to Russia occasions no cultural adjustment problem.

Yet, despite Mrs. Carlisle's perfect command of the Russian language and possession of a family name admitting her to the artistically elite circle, she seems too absorbed in her medium and not sufficiently aware of her reader. There are a few quiet places in the book where the present transitional stage of Soviet art is mentioned. But this point of contact for an American audience is swallowed in silhouette-like descriptions that pass back and forth over anecdotes, literary figures, museums and hotel accommodations with what seems sometimes like a delightful dash of a paintbrush but is too often obvious oversimplification.

In a brief biographical postscript, the publisher reveals that Mrs. Carlisle is herself an artist. Perhaps it is this perspective that gives her book its predominantly pictorial quality; descriptions of flat expanses of white snow, the yellow fog that cloaks St. Petersburg (Leningrad), the powerful face of Ehrenburg, the Peredelkino cottage of Pasternak. There is no strangeness in her descriptions, no straining for the appropriate color or metaphor. But it is just this pictorial effectiveness that seems to militate against the reader's ever getting beneath such facile, charming verbal etchings.

The most vital and inviting aspects of this book are the spirit and vitality of the Russian writers that shine through every citation: a stanza from Evtushenko, a snatch from Sholokov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, or a lyric moment from a Pasternak poem. There is too much suffering, too much dynamic, blood-drenched sadness here to muffle it with a soft, lyrical covering of snow.

Mrs. Carlisle's tangential affinity for the Russian language and for Russian culture effect a ready, smooth dialogue. But somehow one expects more: more difficulty, more conflict in the life of the artists, more depth.

Mary F. Courtney, '63

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